

Meta, TikTok and other social media CEOs testify in heated Senate hearing on child exploitation

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and
HALELUYA HADERO
Associated Press

Sexual predators. Addictive features. Suicide and eating disorders. Unrealistic beauty standards. Bullying. These are just some of the issues young people are dealing with on social media — and children's advocates and lawmakers say companies are not doing enough to protect them.

On Wednesday, the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify as lawmakers and parents grow increasingly concerned about the effects of social media on young people's lives. The hearing began with recorded testimony from kids and parents who said they or their children were exploited on social media. Throughout the hours-long event, parents who lost children to suicide silently held up pictures of their dead kids.



Social media platform heads, from left, Discord CEO Jason Citron, Snap CEO Evan Spiegel, TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew, X CEO Linda Yaccarino, and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are sworn in before testifying during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024, on child safety.

Associated Press
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Meta, TikTok and other social media CEOs testify in heated Senate hearing on child exploitation

Continued from Front

"They're responsible for many of the dangers our children face online," U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin, who chairs the committee, said in opening remarks. "Their design choices, their failures to adequately invest in trust and safety, their constant pursuit of engagement and profit over basic safety have all put our kids and grandkids at risk." In a heated question and answer session with Mark Zuckerberg, Republican Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley asked the Meta CEO if he has personally compensated any of the victims and their families for what they have been through. "I don't think so," Zuckerberg replied.

"There's families of victims here," Hawley said. "Would you like to apologize to them?"

Parents attending the hearing rose and held up pictures of their children. Zuckerberg stood as well, turning away from his microphone and the senators to address them directly.

"I'm sorry for everything you have all been through. No one should go through the things that your families have suffered," he said, adding that Meta continues to invest and work on "industry-wide efforts" to protect children.



Todd and Mia Minor, both of Accokeek, Md., left, hold a photo of their son, Matthew Minor as they attend a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing with the heads of social media platforms on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024, on child safety. The Minor's son, Matthew Minor, died after a TikTok "choking challenge" in 2019.

But time and time again, children's advocates and parents have stressed that none of the companies are doing enough.

"Meta's general approach is 'trust us, we'll do the right thing', but how can we trust Meta? The way they talk about these issues feels like they are trying to gaslight the world, said Arturo Béjar, a former engineering director at the social media giant known for his expertise

in curbing online harassment who recently testified before Congress about child safety on Meta's platforms. "Every parent I've met with a kid under 13 is afraid of when their kid is old enough to be in social media."

Hawley continued to press Zuckerberg, asking if he'd take personal responsibility for the harms his company has caused. Zuckerberg stayed on message and repeated that Meta's job is to "build

industry-leading tools" and empower parents.

"To make money," Hawley cut in. South Carolina Sen. Lindsay Graham, the top Republican on the Judiciary panel, echoed Durbin's sentiments and said he's prepared to work with Democrats to solve the issue.

"After years of working on this issue with you and others, I've come to conclude the following: social media companies as they're currently designed

and operate are dangerous products," Graham said. He told the executives their platforms have enriched lives but that it is time to deal with "the dark side."

Beginning with Discord's Jason Citron, the executives touted existing safety tools on their platforms and the work they've done with nonprofits and law enforcement to protect minors.

Snapchat had broken ranks ahead of the hearing and began backing a federal bill that would create a legal liability for apps and social platforms who recommend harmful content to minors. Snap CEO Evan Spiegel reiterated the company's support on Wednesday and asked the industry to back the bill. TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said TikTok is vigilant about enforcing its policy barring children under 13 from using the app. CEO Linda Yaccarino said X, formerly Twitter, doesn't cater to children.

"We do not have a line of business dedicated to children," Yaccarino said. She said the company will also support Stop CSAM Act, a federal bill that make it easier for victims of child exploitation to sue tech companies. Yet child health advocates say social media companies have failed repeatedly to protect minors. □

Associated Press



Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks during a news conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the State Department, Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

By **MATTHEW LEE**
AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return to the Middle

East later this week on his fifth urgent diplomatic mission since Israel's war with Hamas began in October, the White House and a

Top U.S. diplomat set to return to the Mideast for 5th time since Gaza conflict began

State Department official said Wednesday.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby and the State Department official said Blinken would travel to the Mideast this weekend as part of the Biden administration's efforts to prepare for post-conflict reconstruction and governance of Gaza, ramp up humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians, release hostages held by Hamas and prevent the war from spreading.

The trip comes as discussions over a cease-fire and hostage release are intensi-

fying, but also as fears grow of a regional conflict.

"These negotiations, our negotiations, are very, very active," Kirby said, noting talks held last weekend between CIA Director William Burns, senior Israeli and Egyptian intelligence officials and Qatar's prime minister. "We believe that the discussions have been productive. They've been moving in the right direction."

He also recalled a recent trip to the Mideast by national security council official Brett McGurk, a call between President Joe Biden

and the emir of Qatar, whose country is the chief interlocutor with Hamas, and he said: Blinken "will be heading back over to the region at the end of this week."

The State Department official said Blinken would be traveling to the Middle East "in the coming days" but could not give exact dates or destinations because the trip was still being planned. On his previous visits, Blinken has stopped in Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Iraq. □

Camp Lejeune water contamination tied to a range of cancers, CDC study says

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Military personnel stationed at Camp Lejeune from 1975 to 1985 had at least a 20% higher risk for a number of cancers than those stationed elsewhere, federal health officials said Wednesday in a long-awaited study about the North Carolina base's contaminated drinking water. Federal health officials called the research one the largest ever done in the United States to assess cancer risk by comparing a group who live and worked in a polluted environment to a similar group that did not.

The study found military personnel stationed at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune were at higher risk for some types of leukemia and lymphoma and cancers of the lung, breast, throat, esophagus and thyroid. Civilians who worked at the base also were at a higher risk for a shorter list of cancers. The study is "quite impressive," but cannot count as final proof that the tainted drinking water caused the cancers, said David Savitz, a Brown University disease researcher who is consulting for plaintiffs' attorneys in Camp



In a Feb. 27, 2013 file photo, a sign cautions visitors outside a "pump and treat" facility on the Marine base at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Lejeune-related litigation. "This is not something we're going to be able to resolve definitively," he said. "We are talking about exposures that happened (decades ago) that were not well documented." But he said the new research will add weight to arguments made on behalf of people who got sick after living and working at the base.

Camp Lejeune was built in a sandy pine forest along the North Carolina coast in the early 1940s. Its drinking water was contaminated with industrial solvents from the early 1950s to 1985. The contamination detected in the early 1980s was blamed on a poorly maintained fuel depot and indiscriminate dumping on the base, as well as from an off-base dry cleaner.

Before wells were shut down, contaminated water was piped to barracks, offices, housing for enlisted families, schools and the base's hospital. Military personnel and families drank it, cooked with it and bathed in it. The contamination has spawned lawsuits and accusations that the Marine Corps failed to protect the health of its personnel. Marine Corps officials have re-

peatedly said that federal environmental regulations for these cancer-causing chemicals were not finalized until 1989, after the wells were shut down. People who got sick after being at Camp Lejeune also have criticized the federal government for being slow to investigate. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, or ATSDR, an Atlanta-based sister agency to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has done about a half-dozen studies focused on health problems in people at Camp Lejeune. Those studies were smaller than the new one, and had varied focuses, including male breast cancer rates and birth defects in children born to base personnel. The earlier studies pointed out health risks, but the new work "more fully establishes the scope," said Richard Clapp, a Boston University emeritus public health professor who has been involved in past Camp Lejeune research. Dr. Aaron Bernstein, the head of the ATSDR and CDC's environmental health programs, called the new study "remarkable" for being bigger and more rigorous than past research. □

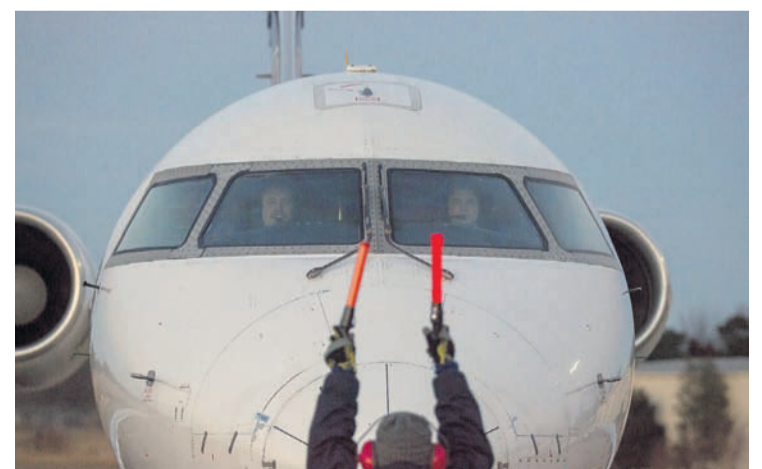
Associated Press

Laser strikes against aircraft including airline planes have surged to a new record, the FAA says

WASHINGTON (AP) — Laser strikes aimed at aircraft including airline planes surged 41% last year to a record high, according to federal officials. The Federal Aviation Administration said Wednesday that it received 13,304 reports from pilots about laser strikes last year, erasing a record set in 2021. "Aiming a laser at an aircraft is a serious safety hazard that puts everyone on the plane and on the ground at risk," FAA Admin-

istrator Mike Whitaker said in a video posted by the agency. The FAA said pilots have reported 313 injuries since the agency started keeping records in 2010. Each of the last five months of 2023 surpassed the previous high month, November 2021. The full-year rise over 2022 numbers easily topped the 28% increase in reported incidents from 2016 to 2022. Authorities blame the surge in attacks on factors including the widespread sale of

inexpensive lasers in stores and online, stronger devices that can hit planes at higher altitudes, and the increased awareness among pilots to report incidents. The FAA said it can fine violators \$11,000 for each violation, up to \$30,800, and federal, state and local law enforcement agencies can file criminal charges. Laser strikes at aircraft are most common during in the first few hours after midnight, according to FAA data. □



A Skywest Airlines aircraft is guided on the tarmac at Barkley Regional Airport in Paducah, Ky., Dec. 27, 2017.

Associated Press

Man accused of beheading his father in suburban Philadelphia home and posting gruesome video online

By **MIKE CATALINI**
Associated Press

LEVITOWN, Pa. (AP) — A man accused of beheading his father in suburban Philadelphia and posting a gruesome video on social media that shows him holding up the severed head has been charged with first-degree murder and abusing a corpse, authorities said Wednesday.

Justin Mohn was armed and had jumped a fence at a National Guard facility about 100 miles (161 kilometers) away when he was arrested late Tuesday, hours after the killing, a Guard spokeswoman said. The father, identified as Michael Mohn, was found beheaded in the bathroom of his home in Levittown, where court records said his 32-year-old son also lived. Police said Justin Mohn was taken into custody at Fort Indiantown Gap.

Police said Michael Mohn's wife, Denise Mohn, arrived home and found the body about 7 p.m. Tuesday. Officers found Mohn's body and bloody rubber gloves, according to a police affidavit. Denise Mohn told



This photo provided by Bucks County District Attorney's Office shows Justin Mohn, 32.

Associated Press

police her husband's white Toyota Corolla and her son were missing.

Police said the YouTube video, which was more than 14 minutes long, showed Justin Mohn picking up his father's decapitated head and identifying him by name. Police said it appeared Mohn was reading from a script as he railed

about the government. In a statement, YouTube said the video, which was uploaded and not livestreamed, was removed for violating its graphic violence policy and that Mohn's channel was shut down.

Mohn embraced violent anti-government rhetoric in writings he published

online going back several years. In August 2020, Mohn published an online "pamphlet" in which he tried to make the case that people born in or after 1991 his birth year should carry out what he termed a "bloody revolution." He also complained at length about a wrongful termination lawsuit that he lost, and encouraged assassinations of family members and public officials.

In the video posted after the killing, he described his father as a 20-year federal employee and called him a traitor to his country. He also espoused a variety of conspiracy theories and rants about the Biden administration, immigration and the border, fiscal policy, urban crime and the war in Ukraine.

Mohn had driven his father's car to Fort Indiantown Gap, where he was taken into custody, Capt. Pete Feeney of the Middletown Township Police Department said.

Officials at Fort Indiantown Gap were told late Tuesday that Mohn's cellphone had pinged nearby, ac-

ording to Angela Watson, communications director for the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Investigators caught up with Mohn inside the National Guard base, where he was walking after having apparently jumped the fence. He had a gun when he was caught, Watson said. She said he has never been a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard.

The house where the body was found is in a suburban development of single-family homes. No one answered the door there early Wednesday.

Neighbors out walking dogs Wednesday morning described Justin Mohn as a regular walker in the development, someone they recognized and described as weird.

Bart DeHaven said he called police a handful of times since the summer after Justin Mohn sat on a raised manhole cover in a park directly across the street from his home and stared at his house. □

Federal judge dismisses Disney's free speech lawsuit against DeSantis

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday dismissed Disney's free speech lawsuit against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, leaving the company's remaining hopes of regaining control of the district that governs Walt Disney World to a separate state court challenge.

U.S. District Judge Allen Winsor in Tallahassee said in his decision that Disney lacked standing in its First Amendment lawsuit against the Republican governor, the secretary of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and DeSantis' appointees to the Disney

World governing district. The separate lawsuit is still pending in state court in Orlando.

Disney had argued that legislation signed by DeSantis and passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature that transferred control of the Disney World governing district from Disney supporters to DeSantis appointees was in retaliation for the company publicly opposing the state's so-called don't say gay law. That 2022 law banned classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades and was championed by DeSantis, who recently suspended his campaign for

the 2024 GOP presidential nomination.

Disney supporters had run the district, which provides municipal services such as firefighting, planning and mosquito control, for more than five decades after the Legislature created it in 1967.

Winsor, who was appointed to the bench by President Donald Trump in 2019, said in his decision that when a law on its face is constitutional, plaintiffs can't make free-speech claims challenging it because they believe lawmakers acted with unconstitutional motives.

"Because that is what Disney seeks here, its claim fails as a matter of law,"

Winsor wrote. Without directly saying it would appeal the decision,

Disney said in a statement that it would "press forward with our case." □



Republican presidential candidate Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks during a campaign event at Wally's bar, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, in Hampton, N.H.

Associated Press

Rumors that Ukraine's top commander may be dismissed expose rifts in Ukraine top brass

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Rifts within Ukraine's top leadership have burst into the open following swirling rumors that the country's top military chief will be dismissed amid reported tensions with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The rumors that Valerii Zaluzhnyi would be sacked were denied by Zelenskyy's office and the Defense Ministry this week and the immensely popular top commander still retains his post. But the reports have fueled expectations of his imminent resignation, which could be a boon for Russia as the war approaches its second anniversary.

His departure would be the most severe shakeup of Ukraine's top military brass since the Russian invasion as the country grapples with dire ammunition and personnel shortages following a failed summer counteroffensive. It also could hurt the morale of Ukrainian troops, who have been fighting grinding battles for nearly two years.

Much needed military aid



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces Valerii Zaluzhnyi, front, attends an event for marking Statehood Day in Mykhailivska Square in Kyiv, on July 28, 2023.

to fuel the next phase of the fight is blocked in the U.S. Congress, and Ukrainian forces are digging in to defend positions against advancing Russian troops. "Zelensky has the right to remove Zaluzhnyi. But he needs to have a very good justification for that,

a very good explanation which is understandable to Ukrainians," said Oleksii Haran, research director at the Democratic Initiatives Foundation in Kyiv. "We know that if Zaluzhnyi is dismissed right now, it will be used by Russian propaganda, it will be used

by forces, including those inside the United States, which are delaying supplies of arms to Ukraine. So this won't be a good thing," Haran said. Zaluzhnyi enjoys widespread popularity across the country and the military, but he has had been

at odds with Zelenskyy since saying in an interview with *The Economist* last year that the fighting with Russia had stalemated. The president denied that was the case.

Reports about Zaluzhnyi's possible dismissal appeared in Ukrainian media Monday. Ukraine's *Mirror of the Week* said, citing unidentified sources close to Zelenskyy and Zaluzhnyi, that the president had asked the general to step down. Zaluzhnyi was offered a post as an adviser, but he rejected that, according to the reports.

The Associated Press could not confirm the reports. Requests for comment by Ukrainian officials, the president's office and Zaluzhnyi's office were not answered. Russian state media delighted Wednesday at Western reports on the rumors, covering the story several times during the flagship discussion program "60 Minutes" on the Russia 1 television channel as well as during news bulletins on the news channel Russia 24. □

Associated Press

EU to launch a Red Sea naval mission within 3 weeks to protect ships from continued Houthi attacks

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union plans to launch a naval mission in the Red Sea within three weeks to help defend cargo ships against attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen that are hampering trade and driving up prices, the bloc's top diplomat said Wednesday. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that he expects the bloc's foreign ministers to sign off on the mission when they meet on Feb. 19. Officials say that seven EU countries are ready to provide ships or planes.

Belgium has already committed to send a frigate. Germany is expected to do the same.

The Iranian-backed Houthis

have waged a persistent campaign of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships over Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas which began in



This photograph provided by the Indian Navy shows U.S.-owned ship Genco Picardy that came under attack Wednesday from a bomb-carrying drone launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Gulf of Aden, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024.

Associated Press

October. However, the Yemen-based rebels have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade between Asia, the Mideast and Europe. Last week, U.S. and British forces bombed multiple targets in eight locations used by the Iranian-backed Houthis. It was the second time the two allies conducted coordinated retaliatory strikes on the rebels' missile-launching capabilities.

Borrell insisted that the EU mission dubbed Aspides, from the Greek for "shield" will not take part in any military strikes and will only operate at sea.

"This is the purpose: protection of the ships. Intercepting of the attacks against the ships. Not participating in any kind of action against the Houthis. Only blocking the attacks of the Houthis," Borrell told reporters before chairing a meeting of EU defense ministers in Brussels.

The ministers discussed which member country should lead the naval effort. France, Greece and Italy are vying for that role and where the mission's headquarters should be based, but no decisions were made public.

Greek Defense Minister Nikos Dendias said that his country's bid was welcomed. □

South Africa says Israel is already ignoring U.N. court ruling ordering it to prevent deaths in Gaza

By GERALD IMRAY and SE-BABATSO MOSAMO

Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa

(AP) — Israel has ignored the ruling by the U.N.'s top court last week by killing hundreds more civilians in a matter of days in Gaza, South Africa's foreign minister said Wednesday, adding that her country has asked why an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not been issued in a case South Africa filed at the separate International Criminal Court.

Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said South Africa would "look at proposing other measures to the global community" in a bid to stop Israel killing civilians during its war in Gaza against Hamas militants, but didn't go into details.

The preliminary ruling by the U.N.'s International Court of Justice in South Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide against Palestinians in the territory. It stopped short of ordering a ceasefire. It also ruled Israel must urgently get basic humanitarian aid to Gaza and sub-



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024.

mit a report on steps taken to abide by the ruling within a month.

A top official in South Africa's foreign ministry has said the country hopes that Friday's ruling, and whether Israel is abiding by it, will be discussed on a wider level at the United Nations, possibly as early as Wednesday. Since the ruling, Israel has continued its military offensive, which it says is aimed at Hamas, and hundreds

more Palestinians have been killed, according to figures from the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The ministry said Wednesday that 150 people were killed in the territory in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of Palestinian deaths in the war to more than 26,700.

The Health Ministry's count does not differentiate between combatants and civilians.

It says the majority of the dead are women and children.

"I can't be dishonest. I believe the rulings of the court have been ignored," South Africa's foreign minister said.

"Hundreds of people have been killed in the last three or four days. And clearly Israel believes it has license to do as it wishes."

Pandor said there was a danger of the world doing

nothing to stop the civilian casualties in Gaza and said similar inaction contributed to the horrific death toll in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, when more than 800,000 people were slaughtered in the East African country.

"We are allowing this to happen again, right before our eyes, on our TV screens," Pandor said.

The court's ruling is binding on Israel, and the country could face U.N. sanctions if it is found to be breaching its orders, although any sanctions may be vetoed by close ally the United States.

Netanyahu has said that Israel "will continue to do what is necessary to defend our country and defend our people." Israel says the offensive is aimed at destroying Hamas after its Oct. 7 attacks on Israel that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

Israel says it has abided by international law and is doing its best to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza.

It says it has killed more than 9,000 militants and accuses Hamas of embedding in civilian areas, making it difficult to avoid civilian casualties. □

Associated Press

Cyprus-led sting operation busts illegal European immigration ring that arranged sham marriages

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP)

— Cyprus officials said Wednesday they led a Europol-organized sting operation that dismantled an international criminal ring facilitating illegal immigration and residency in European Union countries using dozens of sham marriages on the east Mediterranean island nation.

Police said the sham marriages involved women from Portugal and Lithuania and men from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. According to police, the ring was implicated in a host of illegal activities associated

with the more than 130 sham marriages, including circulating forged documents and assisting in illegal entry into the country. Police in Cyprus, Portugal and Lithuania initiated the joint sting operation dubbed "Operational Task Force Limassol" on Jan. 29. They conducted simultaneous searches in targeted homes and arrested 13 suspects in Cyprus, one in Portugal and another in Lithuania.

Cypriot authorities said four of those suspects are believed to be the ring's masterminds.

Two individuals, aged 37 and 24 respectively, were arrested in Cyprus. The other two, aged 45 and 46, were taken into custody abroad on the strength of a European arrest warrant. A Cyprus court on Wednesday ordered the 13 suspects to remain in custody until Feb. 7. Proceedings to extradite the remaining two in Portuguese and Lithuanian custody were underway.

Europol coordinated the sting operation and provided funding and intelligence. □



People enjoy the sun and the sea in the southern port city of Limassol on the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024.

Associated Press

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.



Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piterrella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary devel-

opment on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works. The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon



was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



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They wrote to us saying: "Ben and Karen are back for our 54th year, and it feels like home everytime we come. First trip was our honeymoon in 1970 and if you search your record you will see several past pictures and stories you've done. But yesterday I had a heart warming story. An Aruban recognized me and told me how she cherishes the picture you ran in 1981 showing that in Virginia we proudly fly the Aruba flag with ours 24 hour a day 365 days a year and are well lit at night. So attached is a follow up and we celebrate Betico day."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! ☐

Create museum memories

ORANJESTAD — Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you these museums.

Museum of Industry Aruba
The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas—better known as the art capital of Aruba. This museum exhibits the industrial history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations. The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history, which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising

vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments Fund in 2003 so it can be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruba Museum Foundation (Fundacion Museo Aruban), which is a foundation set to maintain, preserve, and protect the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm. For more information, check out their Facebook page Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba
The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in the area has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Am-

erindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's, AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1.700 m2.

In 1997, the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project.



In 2004, a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006, restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the soon-to-be exhibition space. In December 2007, the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location, the National Archaeological Museum Aruba disposes of approximately 500 m2 for

its permanent exhibit. This exhibit conveys information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island through archaeological objects and modern exhibition techniques. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum also hosts attractive public programs, including lectures, educational projects, temporary exhibits and workshops.

The museum is open daily from 9:30 am till 4:30 pm. For more information check out the Facebook page Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba. ☐

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Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to Etnia Nativa, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algamesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and

appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, The History of Alto Vista by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called



Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteenth century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no lon-

ger see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, ac-

ording to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

Episode XCVIII -98 Desert Island Living

Back to basics and back to simplicity is what brings you back to earth. By relying on those plants that do well in a desert atmosphere, one can create a peaceful and healthy garden living environment while saving on maintenance and garden caring time.

A desert garden can be incredibly attractive and offers many additional benefits such as significant cost savings results. Water is expensive when used in substantial quantities when trying to maintain a more traditional type of garden in an area that is not blessed with a lot of rain like our arid Aruba, where this precious liquid of life can be quite expensive. The trick is experimenting and choosing the right plants species and varieties accustomed to a hot and dry environment. Desert landscaping is both profitable and a wonderful proposition.



Plants like succulents perform at their best in their native climate and our desert environment offers these advantages when using these kinds of plants that thrive in drought conditions.

While it is possible to create

and maintain a lush green lawn in a desert landscaping with frequent watering, it won't matter what you do to encourage growth, it will never be as tough as a bluegrass lawn in a temperate region. However some experimental varieties are being developed.

In our old but beautiful island climate is tropical one and hot all year round. Daytime temperatures are around 29/31 degrees Celsius (84/88 ° F) but the wind moderates the heat. Since the trade wind blows constantly from mainly the Northeast direction, it is advisable to keep in mind

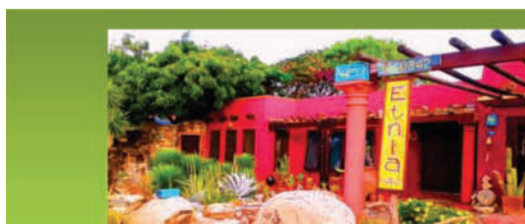
the path of the sun and use the land completely to your advantage when planning an environmental conscious self-sufficient project.

Now, you must keep in mind rain water recollection, garbage disposals, food security, picking the right building material for creating fresh well lid relaxing spaces in a dwelling where without a doubt you can do without the need of an air conditioners operating in the buildings during most of the year.

Although the so-called "rainy season" lasts from the end of October to the beginning of January, most of this rain falls in the form of short and strong showers. It may be the case that mosquitos may become annoying during mornings hours, sun down or at night. So proper screening is recommended to keep bugs outdoors. In case of extremely hot days solar can reduce cooling energy cost during extreme hot days as an alternative. In the following picture we can see a one bed bedroom with open windows looking east to the rising sun. The wind blows through the whole room making it a place to relax and enjoying leisure on clear sunny but windy days.

A fresh and clean air welcomes you to the autochthonous, the fusion of the colonial and native cultures that characterizes Etnia Nativa desert dwelling, wood, woven tapestries and native art work.

To get to know more over Aruba's and its origins, its animals and culture, we highly recommend you to book your visit for our renowned cultural encounter session has been entertaining curious participants for decades. Mail us at etnianaativa03@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels



Article by: Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to the high rise hotels



Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost: Aruban fruits and vegetables

Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mangoes hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never have heard of, but really healthy and delicious.

Mispel

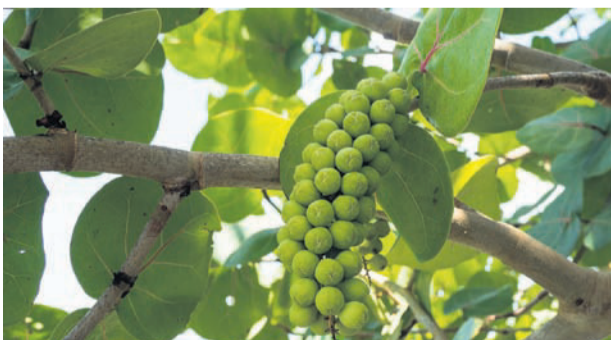
This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year-round.

Kenepa



Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

Druif



There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil right on the beach and it produces clusters of

fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.

Shimarucu



Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

Tamarind



A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a 'batida' (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

Comcomber chiquito

This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Comcomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year-round.

Yambo

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di yambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

Bonch'i Cunucu

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

Pampuna



In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruban restaurants is Sopa Di Pampuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Most

1 Bad tender writer
5 Handout problem seeker

DOWN 1 Sharpen neighbor
12 Incense
13 Forbidden act

14 Split to unite
15 Mysterious

17 Groan inducer
18 Oozes

22 Flight makeup
24 Check the fit of

25 Mythical piper
26 Yale roofer

27 Wield, as power
30 Slump

32 Electrician, at times
33 Tatter

34 He finds somebody sleeping in his bed
38 Gaming spot

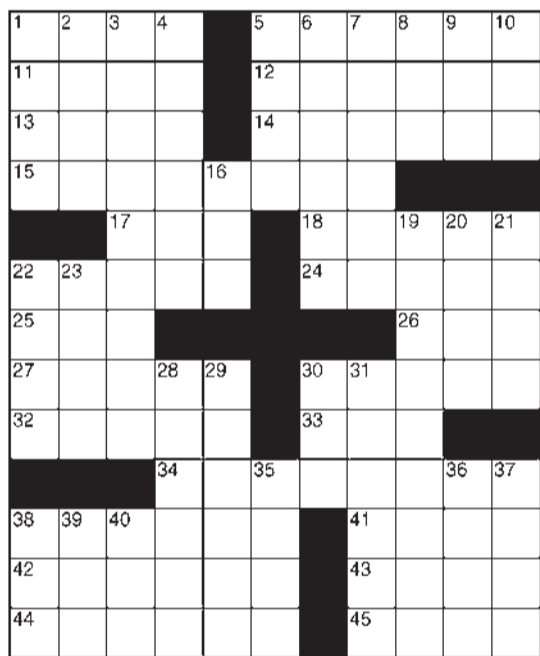
41 "Frozen" princess
42 Defeated

43 "Why don't we!"



Yesterday's answer

- 16 Print units
- 19 Revelation
- 20 Game with mallets
- 21 Scissors sound
- 22 Gush forth
- 23 Fare carrier
- 28 Sales offer
- 29 Barter
- 30 Parched
- 31 Bordering on obscene
- 35 Crooked
- 36 Opposed
- 37 Rough voice
- 38 Gym rat's six-pack
- 39 Old roadster
- 40 Vehicle



2-1

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-1

CRYPTOQUOTE

X O D G E Q C T Q I V F G Q G X M

G B G Q I V F X O S V H F H J G D H Q

T O K O H V F X O S V H Q G S Q G V .

— J T V X G O R G M V Q H O S

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ALL GREAT BEGINNINGS START IN THE DARK, WHEN THE MOON GREET'S YOU TO A NEW DAY AT MIDNIGHT. — SHANNON L. ALDER

Maximize your credit card rewards with minimal effort

By SARA RATHNER of Nerd-Wallet

Credit card rewards can help you get some money back on every dollar you spend, but they can also be confusing. First, there's deciding which card to apply for if you don't yet carry a rewards card. Then, there's how and where best to use it. And finally, the good stuff: cashing in your earned rewards. Rewards program rules can get intense. Points may be worth a certain value when redeemed for travel but have another value if traded in for cash back. Sometimes you can transfer points to airline or hotel loyalty programs, or combine them with someone else's points. Airline miles might be worth more for international travel bookings, but if you just want a cheaper ticket for a domestic flight, your points wouldn't be reaching their full potential.



People pass through Salt Lake City International Airport Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in Salt Lake City.

Associated Press

It's enough to make anyone want to toss their wallet out a window. But with some gentle strategizing, maximizing rewards is possible. (And, yes, if what you want most is discounted domestic travel, go for it.) **MATCH YOUR LIFESTYLE AND DESIRED LEVEL OF EFFORT**

Friends may have strong opinions about which card is best, but your ideal card doesn't need to be trendy. Think about where you spend money the most, how much effort you're willing to put in to manage cards and rewards and what you'd like to redeem rewards for.

If what you want is simplicity, opt for a card that earns a high flat rate on everything. If you're comfortable with some additional complexity, select cards that earn higher rates for your specific spending, such as at grocery stores, gas stations or restaurants, or on travel-related purchases.

Cash-back cards offer the easiest redemption options, typically a statement credit that lowers your next credit card bill, or perhaps a direct deposit into your bank account. Travel cards offer the glamorous promise of cheaper vacations, but using points and miles requires some longer-term planning.

"Try to avoid groupthink and allowing others to influence what card is right for you," says Juan Ruiz, co-founder of JetBetter, a travel concierge and award booking service. "Picking the right card is like being prescribed medication by a doctor." □

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'Orion and the Dark' loses itself in the leap from children's book to animated film

By **MARK KENNEDY**
AP Entertainment Writer

To say the hero of Netflix's new animated movie "Orion and the Dark" is fearful is an understatement.

Orion, 11, is scared of clogging up the school toilet, murderous gutter clowns, cell phones giving him cancer, mosquito bites getting infected, falling off skyscrapers, bees, dogs, haircuts, mispronouncing good morning and the ocean. Among other things.

"It's OK to be nervous more than OK, in fact. It's normal," his mom tells him, helpfully. "Sometimes you just have to feel the fear and do it anyway."

One thing that scares Orion the most is darkness and that is where things get going in this very uneven movie that seems to completely lose the thread by the end, despite a script by renowned filmmaker Charlie Kaufman.

"Orion and the Dark" is about fear and overcoming it but this movie directed by Sean Charmatz has too much junk clogging up the vision. It's based on Emma Yarlett's children's



This image released by Netflix shows a scene from "Orion and the Dark."

book but, like its main human character, lacks confidence, ending with time travel and dimension jumping. You could say the filmmakers are scared of their own movie.

Orion with tufts of wavy brown hair, a thin mouth, ears like satellite dishes and nicely voiced by Jacob Tremblay is visited one night by a hulking Dark, in a black cloak, with only his eyes and teeth in white. He's wonderfully voiced by Paul Walter Hauser.

"You know, there are a lot of people that are scared of me but you you're on a whole different level," Dark

tells Orion. "You are by far the loudest, the most obnoxious and, frankly, the most hurtful."

So a deal is struck: Orion must join Dark for 24 hours as he flies around the globe bringing night to the world. "You'll finally see that I'm nothing to be afraid of. You'll learn to appreciate the beauty of the night instead of being so terrified all the time."

Kaufman the inventive, subversive and mind-blowing mind behind "Being John Malkovich" and "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is rather tame here, despite a David Foster Wal-

lace joke and a gag he should have kept mining with Dark being a fledgling and frustrated moviemaker.

(He calls Sundance "such a boy's club.")

But most of the film lags and there's lots of manufactured conflict. You can tell the dialogue is thin when Orion and Dark both laugh but nothing is happening, trying to telegraph friendship. There's also some cinematic theft, like a child flying on a beast's back like "How to Train Your Dragon" and a kid interrupting the narrator from "Princess Bride."

The animated world is wonderfully realized, from the shaded, uneven grass to the gritty crosswalks of Times Square. There is a welcome use of childhood drawings to give the movie more texture but it's a far cry from the game-changing animation of "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse." Even some voice work from Werner Herzog fails to lift it. Since the source material is a children's book, the filmmakers have added and added, like a group of lame nocturnal spirits unimaginatively called Night Entities Insomnia, Sleep, Quiet, Unexplained Noises and Sweet Dreams. None make much of an impression and Sleep looking suspiciously like a blue version of Telly Monster from "Sesame Street."

Predictably, halfway through the film the roles reverse and it's time for Orion to come to the rescue of Dark. He's feeling insecure about his rival the smarmy, sun-glasses-wearing Light. "Every day I bring lightness and hope to the world and you bring the exact opposite," Light taunts Dark. □

Associated Press

Taylor Swift, Bad Bunny and others may vanish from TikTok as licensing dispute boils over

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
AP Business Writer

Universal Music Group, which represents artists including Taylor Swift, Drake, Adele, Bad Bunny and Billie Eilish, says that it will no longer allow its music on TikTok now that a licensing deal between the two parties has expired.

UMG said that it had not agreed to terms of a new deal with TikTok, and plans to stop licensing content from the artists it represents on the social media platform that is owned by ByteDance, as well as TikTok Music services.

The licensing agreement between UMG and TikTok is expired as of Wednesday.

In a Tuesday letter addressed to artists and songwriters, UMG said that it had been pressing TikTok on three issues: "appropri-

ate compensation for our artists and songwriters, protecting human artists from the harmful effects of AI, and online safety for Tik-

Tok's users."

UMG said that TikTok proposed paying its artists and songwriters at a rate that's a fraction of the rate that other major social platforms pay, adding that TikTok makes up only about 1% of its total revenue.

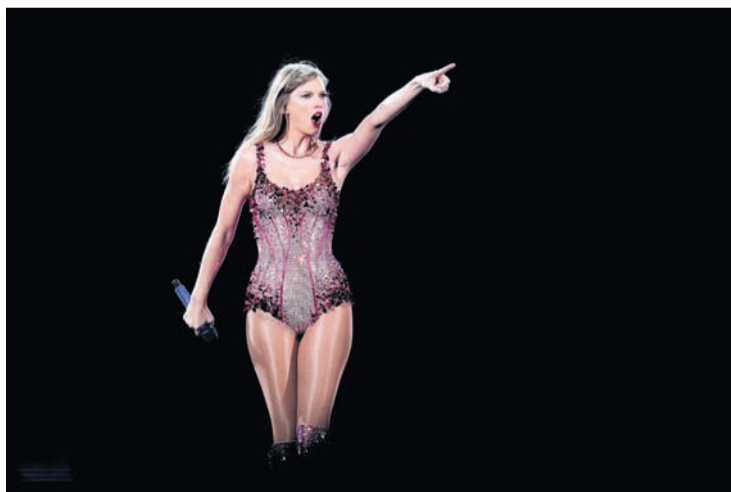
"Ultimately TikTok is trying to build a music-based business, without paying fair value for the music," UMG said.

TikTok pushed back against claims by UMG, saying that it has reached 'artist-first' agreements with every other label and publisher.

"Clearly, Universal's self-serving actions are not in the best interests of artists, songwriters and fans," Tik-

Tok said.

Yet Universal Music also called new technology a potential threat to artists and said that TikTok is developing tools to enable, promote and encourage AI music creation. UMG accused the platform of "demanding a contractual right which would allow this content to massively dilute the royalty pool for human artists, in a move that is nothing short of sponsoring artist replacement by AI." UMG also took issue with what it described as safety issues on TikTok. UMG is unsatisfied with TikTok's efforts to deal with what it says is hate speech, bigotry, bullying and harassment. □



Taylor Swift performs at the Monumental stadium during her Eras Tour concert in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Nov. 9, 2023.

Associated Press

An All-Star shooting showdown: Stephen Curry vs. Sabrina Ionescu is happening

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Stephen Curry is headed back to NBA All-Star weekend. Sabrina Ionescu will be waiting for him.

The shootout that both of them wanted is officially a reality, the NBA announced Tuesday. "Stephen vs. Sabrina" will happen as part of All-Star Saturday Night in Indianapolis on Feb. 17. Curry, the NBA's all-time 3-point king, will take on the reigning WNBA 3-point shootout queen and single-season record holder Ionescu.

"Stage is set! Let's get it," Curry posted on social media.

Ionescu responded simply: "Let's go!"

This matchup was months in the making. Curry was wired with a microphone for Golden State's game last Thursday night against Sacramento and had a discussion with Warriors teammate Brandin Podziemski about Ionescu, who scored an almost-perfect 37 points in the WNBA's 3-point contest last summer. That topped Curry's NBA 3-point contest best of 31.

"I think I've got to challenge her," Curry told Podziemski. Ionescu responded on so-



New York Liberty guard Sabrina Ionescu shoots a 3-point basket during the first half of Game 3 of a WNBA basketball semifinal playoff series against the Connecticut Sun, Sept. 29, 2023, in Uncasville, Conn.

cial media: "Let's getttttt it!! See ya at the 3 pt line." In fact, she technically initiated the challenge: Ionescu posed for a photo imitating Curry's famous lights-out pose while holding her trophy at the WNBA All-Star event and raised the possibility of a matchup.

The NBA was more than happy to make it happen. Curry will shoot from the NBA 3-point line with NBA

basketballs, and Ionescu will shoot from the WNBA 3-point line with WNBA basketballs. At stake: bragging rights and a lot of cash for charity. Curry's Eat.Learn.Play. nonprofit and Ionescu's \$120 Foundation will receive a donation from the NBA and WNBA for participating. Every shot they make \$1,000 for regular 3s, \$2,000 for money-ball 3s and \$3,000 for deeper

3s from nearly 30 feet will bring a donation from State Farm to the NBA Foundation "to support economic empowerment in the Black community," the league said.

Curry has four of the five highest single-season 3-point totals in NBA history, with his record of 402 coming in the 2015-16 season. Ionescu led the WNBA with 128 3s last season, while

shooting nearly 45% from distance.

"I'm envisioning a Bobby Riggs versus Billie Jean King from 1973, so maybe it's the modern-day battle of the sexes," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "I know those two are close. Sabrina being from the bay, we've seen her at our games before and everybody loves her and pulls for her. So it'll be fun to see them shooting against each other."

RISING STARS

No surprise here: Victor Wembanyama is headed to his first All-Star weekend. The San Antonio rookie and No. 1 overall pick in last year's NBA draft was one of 28 players picked for the Rising Stars games, to be held on the Friday of All-Star weekend, Feb. 16.

No. 2 pick Brandon Miller of Charlotte and No. 3 pick Scoot Henderson of Portland are joining Wembanyama among the rookies selected for the games the format is a mini-tournament with the seven-player rosters, and a championship game after two semifinals. Henderson is in the event for a third time, after being picked twice when he played for the G League Ignite in 2022 and 2023. □

Associated Press

David Rubenstein has a deal to buy the Baltimore Orioles for \$1.725 billion, AP source says



Co-founder and co-chairman of the private equity firm The Carlyle Group David Rubenstein speaks in the panel "The Global Economic Outlook" on the last day of the forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Jan. 19, 2024.

Associated Press

By NOAH TRISTER
AP Baseball Writer

Carlyle Group Inc. co-founder David Rubenstein has reached an agreement to buy the Baltimore Orioles for \$1.725 billion, according to a person with knowledge of the deal.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Tuesday night because the agreement had not been announced. Rubenstein, a Baltimore native, would take over as the team's controlling owner, and he's assembled an investment team that includes Ares co-founder Michael Arougheti.

The Angelos family has been in control of the Orioles since 1993, when Peter Angelos purchased the team for \$173 million.

Angelos' son John is the team's current chairman. The team recently reached a deal on a new lease extension at Camden Yards. Maryland officials approved that long-term agreement after months of negotiations.

The deal extended the lease for 30 years, with an option to end it after 15 if the team does not receive approval from state officials for development plans next to the ballpark.

Prior to forming Carlyle in 1987, Rubenstein practiced law in Washington. From 1977-81, he was a deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Jimmy Carter. After graduating from Duke in 1970, he attended University of Chicago Law School. □

Rory McIlroy says the PGA Tour is cheapened without LIV Golf players. He doesn't want them punished

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer
PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP)
 — Rory McIlroy wants golf put back together again as quickly as possible, saying Tuesday that even winning one of the PGA Tour's signature events would feel cheapened because it didn't have all the best players in the world. McIlroy also said he would be opposed to any form of punishment for players who left the tour for the Saudi riches of LIV Golf and wanted to come back. "I think it's hard to punish people," McIlroy said at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. "I don't think there



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland poses with his trophy after he won the final round of the Hero Dubai Desert Classic golf tournament, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024. Associated Press

should be a punishment. Obviously, I've changed my tune on that because I see where golf is and I see that having a diminished PGA Tour and having a diminished LIV Tour or anything else is bad for both parties. "It would be much better being together and moving forward together for the good of the game. That's my opinion of it. So to me, the faster that we can all get back together and start to play and start to have the strongest fields possible, I think, is great for golf." Pebble Beach has a \$20 million purse as a signature event, the same for the individual play of LIV Golf when it begins its third year on Friday in Mexico. LIV announced Tyrrell Hatton is the latest PGA Tour member to join, having snagged Masters champion Jon Rahm nearly two months ago. McIlroy played in the Ryder Cup with both. Pebble Beach has 45 of the top 50 in the world — the other five are with LIV Golf, which does not get world ranking points — and is one of eight signature events with \$20 million purses. McIlroy, who previously has played the Pebble Beach tournament only once, was asked if a victory would feel cheapened without players like Rahm and past Pebble Beach winner Dustin Johnson in the field. "Yeah, I'd like to win here and stand up with a trophy on 18 green and know that I've beaten all of the best players in the world," he said. "So, yeah." McIlroy had said he was comfortable that Rahm would not be leaving for LIV when the rumors first surfaced. He also said he has been talking to Hatton over the last month after the Englishman started receiving offers. □



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